

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MOSCOW 03023 051419Z
ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
-----051421 043078 /40
R 051355Z MAR 77 ZFF-4
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDK IMMEDIATE 4829

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 3023

NODIS CHEROKEE

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM TOON

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, US, UR
SUBJECT: MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER

1. ON VERY SHORT NOTICE, I WAS INVITED TODAY TO MAKE MY CALL ON FOREIGN MINISTER GROMYKO.
2. IN HALF-HOUR CONVERSATION WHICH WAS MOSTLY PROTOCOLARY IN NATURE, MINISTER SAID HE LOOKED FORWARD TO MEETING YOU AND HOPED THAT DURING YOUR MARCH VISIT GOOD PROGRESS TOWARD SOLUTIONS OF CRITICAL PROBLEMS, PARTICULARLY SALT AND MIDDLE EAST, COULD BE MADE. RE FORMER, SOVIET GOVT FELT STRONGLY WE SHOULD PROCEED ON BASIS OF VLADIVOSTOK UNDERSTANDING AND ANY DEVIATIONS THEREFROM WOULD DELAY PROGRESS. RE MIDDLE EAST, GROMYKO RECOGNIZED THAT IN MARCH MEETING LITTLE MORE THAN EXCHANGE OF VIEWS COULD BE EXPECTED BUT FOLLOW-ON DISCUSSIONS, IN "DIFFERENT VENUE", SHOULD BE ENVISAGED. IN ANY CASE, TALKS HE FELT SHOULD BE UNSTRUCTURED--I.E. NO FORMAL AGENDA--AND EACH SIDE SHOULD FEEL FREE TO RAISE SUBJECTS OF ITS CHOICE.

3. GROMYKO CONFESSED TO SOME CONFUSION AS TO MY STATUS. ACCORDING TO TASS REPORT, "SOME AMBASSADORS WERE CONFIRMED, CONFIDENTIAL

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OTHERS WERE NOT CONFIRMED", AND IT WAS HIS UNDERSTANDING I WAS IN LATTER CATEGORY. I EXPLAINED WHAT UNDERLAY WITHDRAWAL OF MY NAME FROM SENATE AS BEST I COULD, BUT YOU WILL UNDERSTAND THAT SINCE I MYSELF AM LARGELY IN THE DARK AS TO MY STATUS, MY ELOQUENCE AND CERTAINLY MY PERSUASIVENESS WERE SOMEWHAT CIRCUMSCRIBED. GROMYKO SAID IN ANY CASE I AM NOW THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR AND HE WOULD

DEAL WITH ME AS SUCH.

4. COMMENT: THIS, I BELIEVE, WAS GROMYKO'S FIRST DAY AT HIS DESK AFTER AT LEAST 6 WEEKS' ABSENCE WHICH HE SAID WAS SPENT AT NEAR-BY SANITARIUM, BOROVIKHA. EVEN ACCOUNTING GENEROUSLY FOR THE NORMAL TOLL OF ADVANCING YEARS, I FELT HE HAD DETERIORATED CONSIDERABLY SINCE I LAST SAW HIM. HE HAS LOST MUCH OF HIS OLD VIGOR, HIS MEMORY HAD DIMMED, AND HIS WIT IS NOT AS SHARP AS IT WAS IN YEARS PAST. HE MAY BOUNCE BACK, BUT I SUSPECT OTHERS WILL CARRY MUCH OF HIS LOAD FROM NOW ON.

TOON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, MEETING REPORTS, CAT-B, CHEROKEE 03/05/77
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 05-Mar-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977MOSCOW03023
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: P840076-1051, N770001-0759
Format: TEL
From: MOSCOW
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770389/aaaadajt.tel
Line Count: 74
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 60b912bd-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NODS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3195547
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER
TAGS: PFOR, PREL, US, UR, (GROMYKO, ANDREY ANDREYEVICH), (TOON, MALCOLM)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/60b912bd-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009